



INDIANA CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

Formal Site Visit Guidance

*For Charter Schools Authorized by
the Indiana Charter School Board*

November 2014

For more information, please visit the
Indiana Charter School Board website:

<http://www.in.gov/icsb>

Overview

One of the most important ways that the Indiana Charter School Board (“ICSB”) gathers performance information about the schools it authorizes is through site visits. Site visits allow the authorizer to observe the school firsthand, interact with key stakeholders, and corroborate school-reported information. Pre-Opening site visits are conducted at least once prior to the start of the school’s first year. Once a school has opened its doors and is serving students, the ICSB regularly conducts Formal, Monitoring, and End-of-Term site visits.

Formal site visits are conducted in the Fall or Winter of each year to gauge the school’s progress toward meeting academic success, financial health, and organizational compliance goals. Formal site visits are conducted by ICSB staff members and/or their authorized designees, who interview key stakeholders, conduct school walkthroughs, review documentation, and attend at least one Board meeting. Written feedback is provided to the Board of Directors and school leadership.

During a charter school’s first year serving students, the Formal site visit is held during the early Winter. The primary purpose of the Formal site visit in the first year is three-fold: to orient the school’s Board of Directors to the ICSB Accountability System, to observe the school firsthand, and to interact with key stakeholders at the school. The Formal Site Visit will occur in the Fall or Winter beginning in the school’s second year serving students.

Purpose of Formal Site Visit

The [ICSB Accountability System](#), which is incorporated into the charter agreement, sets forth the goals and measures for the school and is used to evaluate the school’s academic performance, financial health, and organizational compliance. At its core, the Accountability Plan poses three critical questions:

- Is the school’s educational program a success?
- Is the school in good financial health?
- Is the organization in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and with the charter?

During the Formal Site Visit, the ICSB seeks to address these three questions. Outlined below is the process the ICSB review team utilizes during the Formal Site Visit to gather information as evidence of progress in each category.

Is the school’s educational program a success? The ICSB gathers information on the academic program through a review of academic outcomes as measured by state assessments, interviews with leadership and staff, classroom observations, and inspection of the physical learning environment. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data enables the ICSB to better understand the overall success of the school.

Is the school in good financial health? The ICSB gathers information on the school’s financial health from interviews with leadership, board members and staff, observation of business practices, and examination of the school’s financial reports and annual independent audit as described in the [Financial Reporting Guidelines](#) posted on the ICSB website. Interviews with stakeholders are critical to understanding how well the school is managed financially and the extent of Board knowledge surrounding financial oversight.

Is the organization in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and with the charter? The ICSB gathers information on the school's organizational effectiveness and leadership through interviews with leadership and staff, observation of school routines and school climate, examination of school documents, and attendance at a school Board meeting. The ICSB may complete a document review on site to monitor compliance. We also analyze the extent to which the Board understands its roles and responsibilities in both oversight of the school's operations and in driving the strategic direction of the school.

Planning for the Formal Site Visit

To help schools plan for the Formal site visit, we ask school leadership and the Board to make necessary arrangements and prepare applicable documents for review. *Appendix A* of this document details the specific information we request of each school. The Formal site visit will be held at the school location and will typically last 6-8 hours. In the school's first year serving students, the site visit will last approximately 3-4 hours.

The ICSB review team will review the following materials prior to the visit:

1. Charter Agreement, including the Application and any Amendments
2. Annual Report
3. Available Financial and Academic Data
4. Previous Formal Site Visit Summary Report(s)
5. Annual Financial and Compliance Audit
6. Board Meeting Minutes from the last six Board meetings
7. Master Schedule
8. Correspondence between ICSB and School (if applicable)
9. Intervention materials, if applicable (e.g., Corrective Plan)
10. Any other relevant materials the school's Board and leadership request the ICSB to review

Note that, during the school's Formal site visit in its first year serving students, only Items 1, and 6-10 are applicable.

Site Visit Overview

In preparation for the Formal Site Visit, we request the following assistance and deliverables from school leadership. See *Appendix A* for additional details on these and other action items.

- Proposed Site Visit Schedule. Create a site visit schedule. Schools may refer to the sample site visit schedule in *Appendix B* of this document. Note that the Site Visit Schedule is to be used as a guide for the school and the ICSB team and that flexibility at times may be necessary given information gathered throughout the school day.
- Send Requested Documentation to ICSB. Email Board Meeting minutes, agenda and materials for upcoming Board Meeting, Master Schedule, and requested Monitoring documents (see Charter, Exhibit B) to the ICSB review team.
- Allocate Sufficient Time. Allocate time for the leadership team to accompany ICSB staff during classroom observations, participate in meetings, and debrief at the end of the site visit to discuss observations.

Prior to the visit, please notified the ICSB team of any unique scheduling circumstances for the day. For example, the ICSB team should be notified of any testing, new teachers in the building, substitutes, and special programming. Please note that much of the site visit includes meetings with key stakeholders.

During the visit, the ICSB team will – either individually or as a full team – complete the following tasks:

- Check in with school leadership to review schedule for the day.
- Meet with the School Leader to discuss the status of the school, including areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- Meet with representatives of the Education Service Provider (“ESP”), if applicable.
- Observe classrooms, hallway transitions, and out-of-class time (e.g., lunch) with school leadership. Please allow for at least two devoted 40 minutes periods for observation and school walk-throughs. Note that an ICSB team member may observe classrooms or conduct school walkthroughs at the same time another ICSB team member is conducting an interview or focus group.
- Meet with Special Education Coordinator/Teacher of Record.
- Meet with 3-4 teachers, potentially during their lunch hour or prep periods.
- Meet with the CFO/COO or their equivalent. If bookkeeping services are handled by a third-party, a representative of the third-party should attend this portion of the site visit.
- Meet with the curriculum and/or assessment coordinator. This individual may or may not be the School Leader.
- Meet with 4-6 parents.
- Meet with 3-4 students.
- Meet with the Board Chair (Note: this meeting may be scheduled to coincide with the observation of the Board meeting).
- Meet with the Chair of the Audit or Finance Committee (Note: this meeting may be scheduled to coincide with the observation of the Board meeting).
- Attend and observe a Board meeting. Due to scheduling constraints, this may occur on a separate day.
- Debrief with the Board Chair, School Leader and ESP representative (if applicable) to provide verbal feedback on the day’s observations. Depending upon scheduling constraints, this debrief session may occur via telephone a day or two after the site visit.

The ICSB review team will conduct all stakeholder meetings with a long-term perspective in mind. The purpose of these meetings is to review the progress of the school over the course of the charter term, not just during the current school year. Wherever possible, meetings should be conducted separately. Note that the ICSB team may ask stakeholders to provide evidence to substantiate a statement (e.g., Board minutes).

Additional Board members are welcome to attend parts of the site visit; however, please be aware of Open Door Law requirements with respect to quorum.

Site Visit Feedback

Following the Formal site visit, ICSB staff will provide formal written feedback summarizing our observations. The feedback will identify areas of strength as well as areas that require improvement. This written feedback will be provided to the Board, school leadership and ESP (if applicable) in the form of a narrative and completed Site Visit Form (Appendix C). Pursuant to Paragraph 15.4 of the [Charter Agreement](#), if concerns arise from a site visit, the ICSB may require the school to implement a Corrective Plan and/or the ICSB may conduct additional Monitoring Visits. Please note that feedback and/or requested Corrective Action is not limited to the Site Visit Form or the

contents therein. At the request of the school's Board and school leadership, ICSB staff will schedule follow-up conference calls or attend an additional Board meeting to discuss the written feedback

Appendix A: Document Requests and Preparation

To ensure time is well-spent during the Formal site visit, please have the following items completed or prepared before the visit, and available the day of the visit.

PRIOR TO SITE VISIT		
ITEM #	ACTIVITY AND/OR DELIVERABLE	TARGET COMPLETION DATE
1	Create a proposed site visit schedule and schedule meetings with key stakeholders (e.g., Board Chair, School Leader, CFO/COO, Education Service Provider representative, curriculum coordinator, teachers, parents, students, and other key stakeholders).	Initiate scheduling approximately 2 weeks in advance of the site visit. Finalize schedule 1 week prior to site visit.
2	Identify a private meeting space with internet access in which the ICSB review team can conduct meetings, document observations, and conduct other tasks related to the visit. Ensure that the steps for gaining internet access and wireless passwords (if necessary) are provided.	Approximately 2 weeks in advance of the site visit.
3	Make teachers and staff aware of the visit and let teachers know that observers may be stopping by the classrooms. (No special accommodations are necessary for classroom visits.)	During scheduling process.
4	Email the following documents to the ICSB staff: (1) Board Meeting minutes from the last 6 Board Meetings; (2) Board Meeting agenda for the upcoming Board Meeting; (3) Master Schedule, including periods/times of instruction, instructor names, and room numbers; (4) other documents requested per Exhibit B: Monitoring Plan of the Charter Agreement ; and (5) any other documents in the school's possession that the Board and leadership believe are relevant for ICSB staff to review.	1 week prior to site visit.
5	Email the final proposed site visit schedule to ICSB staff. Be sure to indicate on the schedule the time school starts that day. See <i>Appendix B</i> for a sample schedule.	1 week prior to site visit.

AVAILABLE DURING SITE VISIT	
ITEM #	ITEM OR DELIVERABLE
1	Notice of any special events or exceptions to the master schedule (e.g., an all-school assembly, classroom with substitute teachers, events in the community that impact the school day, etc.)
2	Any additional information the school leadership believes will assist the ICSB review team in assessing the school's overall performance (e.g., strategic plan, interim student assessment results)

Appendix B: Sample Proposed Formal Site Visit Schedule

**ABC School
ICSB Site Visit Agenda
Friday, February 8, 2013**

Main Contact: Joe Smith, Operations Manager 317-222-2222
School Commences: 7:45 a.m.

Time	Location	Agenda Item
8:00 – 8:05 AM	Main Office	Check in with office staff and School Leader, and proceed to designated meeting room
8:05 – 9:00 AM	3 rd Floor Conference Room	Meet with School Leader
9:00 – 9:45 AM	3 rd Floor Conference Room	Meet with Education Service Provider Representative
9:45 – 10:30 AM	2 nd Floor Staff Room	Meet with Parents
10:30 – 11:30 AM	School-wide	Classroom Observations and School Walk-through
11:30 – 12:15	3 rd Floor Conference Room	Curriculum Coordinator: Mr. Adams Assessment Coordinator: Ms. Wilson
12:15 – 12:45 PM	3 rd Floor Conference Room or Lunchroom	Break for Lunch/ Classroom Observations and School Walk-through
12:45 – 1:15 PM	3 rd Floor Conference Room	Meeting with Special Education Coordinator/Lead Teacher
1:15 – 2:00 PM	School-wide	Classroom Observations and School Walkthrough
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Lunchroom	Meet with Students
2:30 - 3:00 PM	3 rd Floor Conference Room	Meet with COO and third-party bookkeeping firm Available teacher on prep: Ms. Thomas (Rm 312) (Note: this meeting can also be arranged to coincide with Board meeting observation.)
3:00 – 3:45 PM	3 rd Floor Conference Room	Meet with Board Chair and Chair of Finance Committee (Note: this meeting can also be arranged to coincide with Board meeting observation.)
3:45 – 4:00 PM	3 rd Floor Conference Room	ICSB staff consultation time
3:45 - 4:45 PM	3 rd Floor Conference Room	Debrief with Board Chair, School Leader
5:00 – 7:00 PM	Rm 313	ABC School's Board of Directors Meeting

Appendix C: Formal Site Visit Summary Feedback Form

ICSB Formal Site Visit Summary Feedback Form

[School Name]

[Date]

Is the Educational Program a Success?					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
<i>Mission and Vision</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission and vision are central to the school's identity and inform all decision making processes. The school's educational program exemplifies the mission and vision of the school. Observations suggest that the school is making adequate progress toward its mission-specific goals and the indicators and measures set forth in the ICSB Accountability Plan. Staff members are passionate about accountability and student achievement. 	4	3	2	1	
<i>Curriculum and Instruction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school provides an appropriate, differentiated range of learning opportunities that will enable students to have individual learning needs met. The school has an explicitly standards-based curriculum program, aligned to the school's mission, and is in compliance with Indiana's graduation requirements. Teachers have effective strategies for teaching the student population of the school. Teachers support students in applying learning strategies across all subjects. Teachers hold high expectations for all students. Teachers use time well to support instruction and student time on task is maximized. Teachers use support staff effectively. Teachers use technology and other resources effectively. Teachers are consistent and effective in implementing behavior management strategies. All teachers (but especially new teachers) are supported through a strong professional development plan. Professional development is job-embedded and directly linked to changing instructional practice in order to improve student achievement. 	4	3	2	1	

	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
<i>Assessment</i>	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school culture is one of reflection and analysis of multiple forms of student data. All staff routinely uses data to track student progress, support education decisions for individual students, and make key school-wide and individual classroom programming decisions. Student achievement data are regularly reported to staff, parents, and students. Formative assessment practices are in clear evidence in all instructional practices. 					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
<i>School Culture</i>	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are effectively encouraged to behave well, relate well to others and to have positive attitudes toward learning. Classrooms and hallways provide an attractive and stimulating environment that fosters high academic and personal expectations. School routines and rules are implemented fairly and consistently and communicated clearly to students, parents, and staff. Educational Equity for all students is a clear motivating factor for development of behavior policies and academic decisions. The school has effective measures for promoting good attendance and eliminating truancy and tardiness. The school works with parents to build positive relationships and to engage them as partners in their children's learning. The school is successful in implementing a variety of strategies specifically designed to promote a sense of connection between students and adults. Students are motivated to learn. Anti-bullying procedures are evident in both policy and practice. 					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
<i>Special Populations</i>	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has an appropriate process for identifying students with special needs (e.g., Child Find process assessment and IEP development). The school is making appropriate accommodations for students with special needs (e.g., provides special programs and services in accordance with IEPs and due process; provides special education training to staff where appropriate, etc.). 					

<ul style="list-style-type: none">The school is making appropriate accommodations for students with LEP (e.g., English Language Development levels are accurately and appropriately identified in a timely manner) and systems are in place for maintaining proficient staff attention to English Language Learner standards and best practices in instruction.					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
Academic Leadership	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The school leader provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school.Leadership uses classroom observation and the analysis of learning outcomes to improve teaching and learning.Leadership evaluates the effectiveness of teaching and support staff, and makes decisions on bonuses, raises, professional development plans, probationary support, continued employment, etc.The school leader ensures that there is strong accountability for student achievement throughout the school, for individual employees as well as the collective school culture.					
Is the School in Good Financial Health?					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
Financial Management	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The board-approved budget helps advance the mission of the school.The board-approved budget is balanced and is based on realistic enrollment counts.The school has a plan for maintaining a positive cash flow, with clear attention given to any legislative funding shifts and contingencies.The school is correcting all findings from the previous audit.If the school has entered into a contract for financial services, there is a clear understanding and agreement regarding respective roles and responsibilities of both parties.The school currently has no complaints from vendors regarding late payments.					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
Financial Oversight	4	3	2	1	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board has working knowledge of the school’s financial position and routinely reassesses that financial position throughout the year.• Evidence of an active Finance or Audit Committee, or the equivalent, was present.• Observations indicate that Board Meeting materials include financial statements that comply with ICSB Financial Reporting requirements.• Observation reflects that the Board regularly monitors the school’s financial health and has a comprehensive understanding of the school’s financial health.					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
Financial Policies and Procedures	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board has approved a set of financial policies and uses these policies on a routine basis to hold school leadership (including the Education Service Provider, if applicable) accountable.• Evidence the school staff, including any third-party financial services entity, complies with the financial policies approved by the Board.					
Is the Organization in Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations, and with the Charter?					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
Legal Compliance	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school has Compliance binders (or their equivalent) available that contain all documentation as set forth in <u>Exhibit B: Monitoring Plan</u> of the Charter Agreement.• Observation indicates the Board has working knowledge of and complies with Indiana’s Public Access Laws, including the Open Door Law.• The Board is in compliance with its Conflict of Interest policy and Code of Ethics, as evidenced by documentation submitted with the Accountability Plan Progress Report, Board Meeting minutes, interview responses and Board meeting observations.• Observation indicates the school is in material compliance with student enrollment, admissions, retention, discipline, SPED, ELL and due process rights as set forth in Category III: Organizational Compliance of the ICSB Accountability Plan.• Evidence that any complaints filed by students and families have been addressed in accordance with Indiana law and have adhered with the school’s published grievance process.• (If Applicable) The Board reports that the Education Service Provider (ESP) is in compliance with the terms of the management services agreement. This agreement complies with ICSB requirements as set forth in <u>Exhibit K</u> of the Charter Agreement.					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
School Board Effectiveness	4	3	2	1	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are committed to the school, and their actions enhance the credibility of the school. Evidence includes regular attendance at Board meetings. • Board members understand their fiduciary role in ensuring the school is fulfilling the terms of the charter, in determining the direction of the school, and in supporting the school's progress toward its stated goals. • Board members hold themselves accountable for maintaining the viability, performance, and sustainability of the school. • The Board reviews the school's academic achievement results and progress and uses this information to make decisions about the school's direction. • The Board reviews the school's financial and operational performance and uses this information to make decision about the school's direction. • The Board has established clear performance criteria for the School Leader or (if applicable) Education Service Provider (ESP), and evaluates the performance of the School Leader or ESP based on these criteria at least once per year. 					
	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Improvement Necessary	Does Not Meet Standard	*N/A Not Applicable
<i>Organizational Effectiveness</i>	4	3	2	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school facility is safe and conducive to learning. • Observation indicates infrastructure and support services are effective and support a quality learning environment. Examples include: technology, transportation, food services. • Observation indicates the school has a strong culture of organization, with clear roles and responsibilities for all members of the school community. • The school exhibits a high level of family satisfaction based on student retention data, responses during parent interviews, and other sources of feedback (e.g., volume and type of complaints filed by families). • External partnerships have been strategically developed to engender academic improvement (e.g., community partnerships, field trips, etc.). Partnerships are implemented in a quality manner and are maintained from year to year (if and as appropriate). • All school stakeholders (e.g., students, families, staff, Board members, the ICSB, Indiana Department of Education) are provided with accurate and timely information about the school. Such information is reported through an effective student information system, as well as through more traditional means of communication (e.g., school newsletters, emails, phone calls). • Students and families are given accessible, relevant and regular information about student academic progress. • Staff members have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, and are routinely assessed on their performance. Staff members report that they regularly receive clear, action-oriented feedback on their performance from the instructional leader and/or School Leader. 					

- Evidence that staff receive training or support they need to improve their performance. Evidence that all staff members are formally evaluated according to a set of performance criteria communicated in advance to the staff person. Such evaluations occur at least once per year.
- Evidence that the school has a well-organized student recruitment, enrollment and retention strategy, which is implemented in a timely and quality manner.

Areas of Strength

Areas Recommended for Improvement

Follow Up Requirements and Reporting Deadlines

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***Not applicable for this school, or evidence was not gathered to substantiate an opinion**